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ABSTRACT

A study examined earning patterns among secretaries. A mail questionnaire that contained 76 separate questions soliciting responses on 154 variables was administered to a sample of nearly 1,000 members of Professional Secretaries International throughout the United States and Canada. It was determined that length of time with an employer has more impact on salary than skills, education, or even job title. However, compensation did not appear to keep up when secretaries stayed with the same supervisor too long (unless that supervisor was promoted). New secretaries earned only \$1,000 per year less than those with 20 years of experience. Low pay rates make job hopping unprofitable, but those just entering the field appeared to benefit from the shortage of secretaries. The title Certified Professional Secretary appeared to command higher entry salaries. Except for those without a high school diploma and those with a master's degree, education did not affect salary. Secretaries employed after 45 years of experience earned less than those just entering the field. When all other factors were equal, secretaries who were heads of households earned more. The majority of respondents saw no advancement opportunity; however, having a career discussion with one's supervisor was considered helpful. (MN)

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Secretaries . . .

WHO EARNS WHAT? AND WHY?

The findings of this survey contradict the claims of fair-pay opponents that women earn less than men because they have less experience, miss more work due to family obligations and have fewer skills and lower educational levels.

Neither employers nor their secretaries are getting a fair deal in the marketplace.

Employers are not paying for what they say is valuable, and secretaries are not being paid for what they are told is valuable.

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INTRODUCTION

This survey was commissioned by the Research and Educational Foundation of Professional Secretaries International™ as part of its mandate from the consensus of Secretary Speakout '83 to work with employers to develop upward mobility criteria for the secretarial profession.

Brennan, Thomsen Associates, personnel and pay practice consultants, analyzed the data and presented the findings.

Because diagnosis must precede prognosis, this survey was designed to determine the factual status quo in the profession. Without accurate information on actual present circumstances of secretaries, it would be impossible to either plan or implement corrective action that would serve the mutual interests of secretaries and their employers.

The study was not designed to tell employers how much a secretary should earn or the conditions for advancement. Its purpose was to obtain preliminary data on a very complex subject to allow a dialogue to begin between employers and Professional Secretaries International, acting as the voice of the secretarial profession.

The results were compiled from almost 1,000 completed questionnaires obtained from members of Professional Secretaries International from across the country who are employed in a wide variety of fields.

FOREWORD

We are proud to present this study on secretarial compensation and advancement policies in North America.

Secretaries always have met the challenge of increasing office productivity, but the recent revolution in office automation is presenting them an even greater opportunity.

Representing the largest segment of the white-collar work force, the country's 3.9 million secretaries (of whom fewer than one percent are men)* must not only master this equipment but also use their specialized knowledge to effectively integrate it into the office structure. Employers must retain and attract the best people possible for this task.

It is vital to the nation's economic health that this core of the white-collar work force receive the necessary motivation and compensation to do the job required.

We believe this study will be the starting point of meaningful discussions between employers and those in the secretarial profession.



Rita S. Hummel, CPS
President
Professional Secretaries International

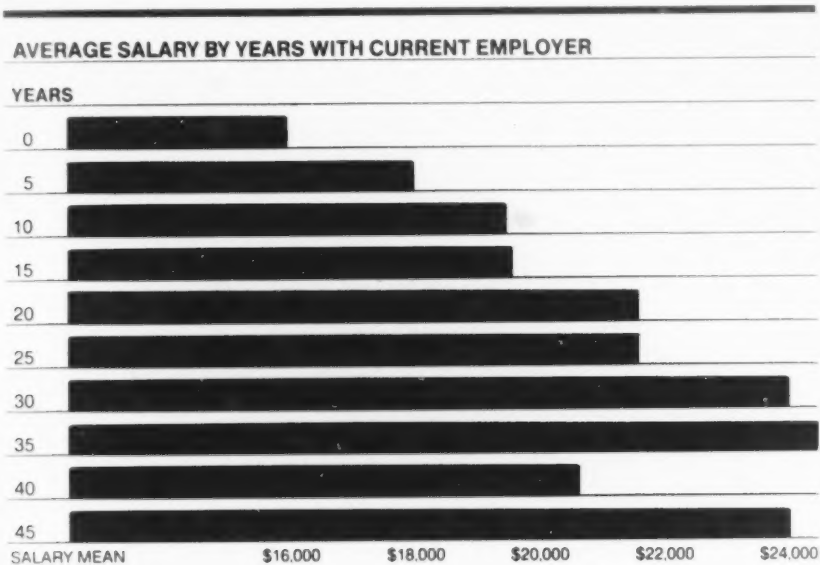
*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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PAY IS BASED ON SENIORITY

Pay is based more on seniority than on skill, effort, education, duties or even job titles, according to the answers of respondents. The longer one stays with an employer, the more one earns.



The next most influential factors affecting secretarial salaries are:

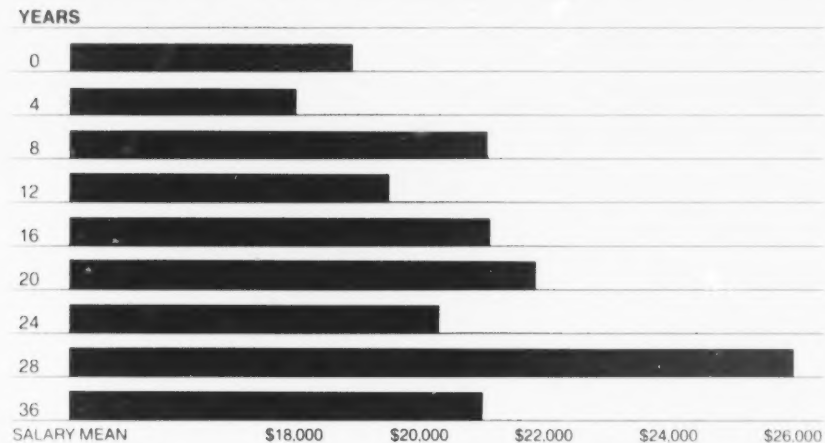
- title of secretary's boss
- the scope of the business (local, regional, national or international). The wider the scope, the higher the pay.
- employer's pay policy (whether it pays high, average or low salaries to all employees.)
- the numbers of employees at the work location.

The highest paid secretaries report to a top executive of an international firm that pays above-average salaries. They have worked there for many years, and there are a number of employees at the work location.

BUT STAYING WITH SAME BOSS CAN BE HARMFUL

While survey responses showed that staying with the same company does bring greater compensation rewards, remaining with the same supervisor does not, unless one has been with that supervisor for about 28 years.

AVERAGE SALARY BY YEARS WITH CURRENT SUPERVISOR



Secretaries who have worked for the same supervisor for 24 years make less money than those with eight years of reporting to the same boss.

The highest salaries are earned by those who were promoted into their jobs. Their pay averages \$2,000 a year higher than the average for secretaries who were hired into their present job.

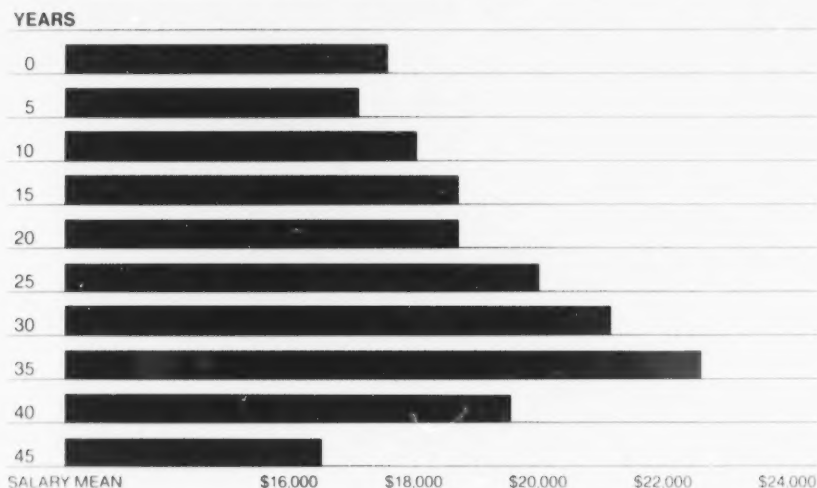
But those promoted with the same boss earn slightly more than those promoted to a new boss.

CAN'T TAKE EXPERIENCE TO THE BANK

Employers may say they want experience, but they don't pay for it, based on the pattern discovered by the survey. There is almost no difference in average salary between those with a considerable amount of secretarial experience and those with very little.

Secretaries with no experience are paid more than those with five years of secretarial experience. New secretaries earn only \$1,000 less than those with 20 years of experience in the secretarial profession.

AVERAGE SALARY BY YEARS OF SECRETARIAL WORK



NO ADVANTAGE IN JOB HOPPING

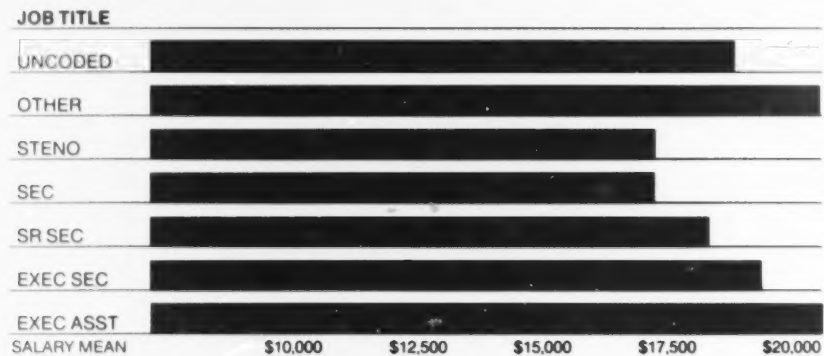
Despite all the talk about shortages of competent secretaries in the market place, employers have not shown any signs of willingness to increase secretarial pay rates enough to make job-hopping profitable.

The principal beneficiaries of the secretarial shortage are new secretaries, who enter the job market at a time when employers subsidize higher starting salaries for beginning secretaries by holding down the starting salaries for more experienced secretaries.

BETTER TITLE WORTH ABOUT \$1,000

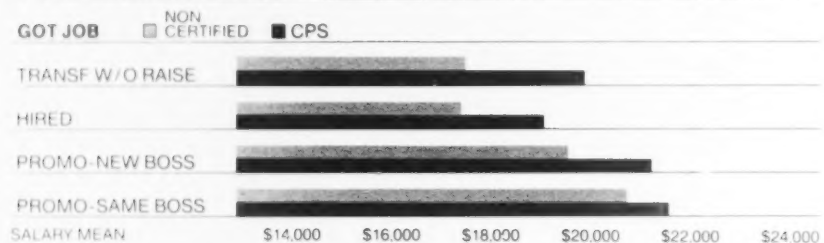
The survey found that there is little more than \$1,000 difference in average annual salary per step in higher titles.

AVERAGE SALARY BY JOB TITLE



The chart below gives average salaries according to how respondents obtained their present positions. Those with the Certified Professional Secretary rating earned more in each of the four classifications. For example, they were hired into their current jobs for an average of \$1,500 more than those without the CPS rating.

AVERAGE SALARY BY CPS



*For an explanation of the Certified Professional Secretary rating, see page 16.

EDUCATION BARELY TRANSLATES INTO DOLLARS

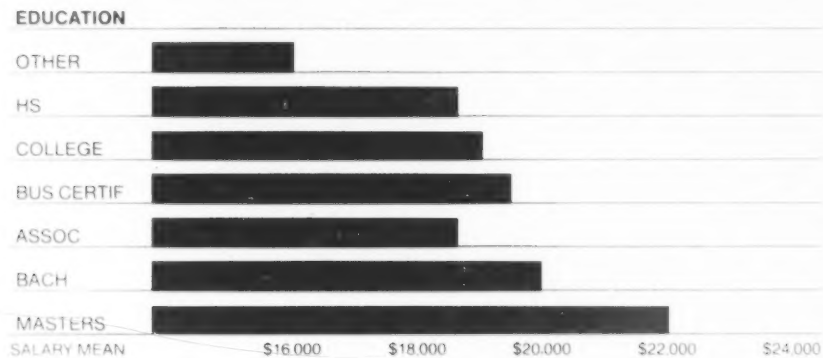
Aside from extreme cases, education alone has little impact on compensation.

The lack of a high school diploma costs \$2,500 a year, and a masters degree adds \$1,500 to the average salary; but pay for all levels of education between those two extremes is about the same.

Those with a high school diploma, those with some college but no degree, those with a business school certificate, an associate degree or a bachelors degree all earn within \$1,500 of each other.

Possession of a business school certificate brings salary to within \$500 of the salary for a bachelors degree.

AVERAGE SALARY BY EDUCATION



AGE HAS NEGATIVE IMPACT

Those still employed after 45 years of work experience as a secretary actually earn a lower salary than those who have just started work. The average salary climbs steeply for secretaries with 25 to 35 years of experience but then drops dramatically.

The rapid and steady decline in average salary after 35 years as a secretary could be due to legitimate reasons such as diminished job responsibilities and lower skill levels, or more disturbing reasons such as the cumulative effect of historical past sex discrimination or more recent age discrimination.

The failure of questions regarding duties and skills to accurately predict salary levels suggest that discrimination is more likely the cause. That hypothesis is supported by the fact that when all factors are taken into account, age has a negative impact on pay. The older one is, the less one earns as a secretary.

FAMILY ROLE AFFECTS PAY

Another finding of particular interest with regard to compensation issues is the positive pay influence of being the head of the household.

Secretaries who head their households earn more than those who do not, when all other factors are kept equal. Secondary wage earners earn less.

When all differences in job duties, employer characteristics, personal skills, experience and education are taken into account, dependents still earn lower salaries than heads of households.

While the marketplace would seem to decree that one's family role is more important to pay level than the work role, it cannot be established from the data at hand if heads of households are paid more because they are better workers.

VIEWS ON ADVANCEMENT ARE MIXED BUT TALKING SEEMS TO HELP

Respondents' opinions about career advancement potential were mixed. Only a few more than a third of the secretaries surveyed believed they had opportunities for advancement in their profession with their current employer, while 42 percent saw no advancement opportunities. The remaining 20 percent either didn't know or didn't answer the question.

Higher paid secretaries see more potential for professional advancement than their lower paid peers.

AVERAGE SALARY BY CAREER ADVANCEMENT

BOSS'S PRESCRIBED ADVANCEMENT NEEDS



Those who see clear advancement opportunities have the same average pay as those who don't know about their career prospects. Confidence in the future, therefore, does not relate to higher pay, although a perception of a blocked future does relate to lower pay.

Optimism about advancement potential as a secretary is linked to a history of those who don't know about their career prospects. Confidence in the future, therefore, does not relate to higher pay, although a perception of a blocked future does relate to lower pay.

Optimism about advancement potential as a secretary is linked to a history of higher salary increases and more discussion with supervisors about career possibilities.

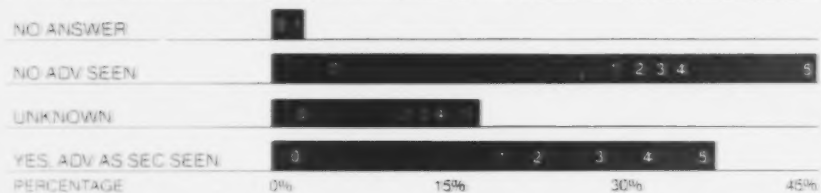
There are signs that companies do pay a bit more for improvement in technical skills. Secretaries who have been told that technical skill development is needed for advancement and have taken courses toward the Certified Professional Secretary® rating report both slightly higher salary increases and more confidence in their future as a secretary.

However, the vast majority of secretaries reported that they never had any discussions with their supervisors about career advancement opportunities.

Unfortunately, many who have had career discussions have reason to believe that companies will not keep promises made.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT PERCEPTIONS

BOSS'S PRESCRIBED ADVANCEMENT NEEDS



- 0 - No answer given
- 1 - The subject has not been discussed
- 2 - More formal education
- 3 - Technical skill development in my current profession
- 4 - Increased knowledge of other functional areas
- 5 - Circumstances beyond my control

Although the higher paid secretaries tend to be told that more formal education is needed for further advancement as a secretary, employers really do not pay secretaries with college degrees much more than they pay high school graduates, as shown on page 10.

Lower paid secretaries are typically told that advancement depends on circumstances beyond their control. These people are the most pessimistic about their chances for career advancement where they work.

METHODOLOGY

The survey form created contained 76 separate questions soliciting responses on 154 variables. The questions covered demographic data, personal and professional background, education, employer characteristics, job duties and responsibilities, working conditions, career expectations, career development actions and job-related likes and dislikes.

The initial survey form contained many more questions than are normal in such studies in order that the widest possible variety of responses could be collected and all questions tested for usefulness before sending a more refined survey form to the general membership, nonmember secretaries and employers. Almost all questions were multiple-choice to permit fast and easy (within ten minutes) completion of the form.

Survey forms were distributed to members of Professional Secretaries International attending regional conferences throughout the United States and Canada during the last few months of 1983.

Almost 1,000 forms were completed (anonymously), responses were coded, verified and then subjected to statistical analysis.

SURVEY RESPONDENT DISTRIBUTION

The largest group responding to the survey was executive secretaries, followed by those with the title of secretary, executive assistant and senior secretary. Another large group who consider themselves professional secretaries fell into the "other" category with such titles as executive assistant, office administrator and senior clerical specialist.

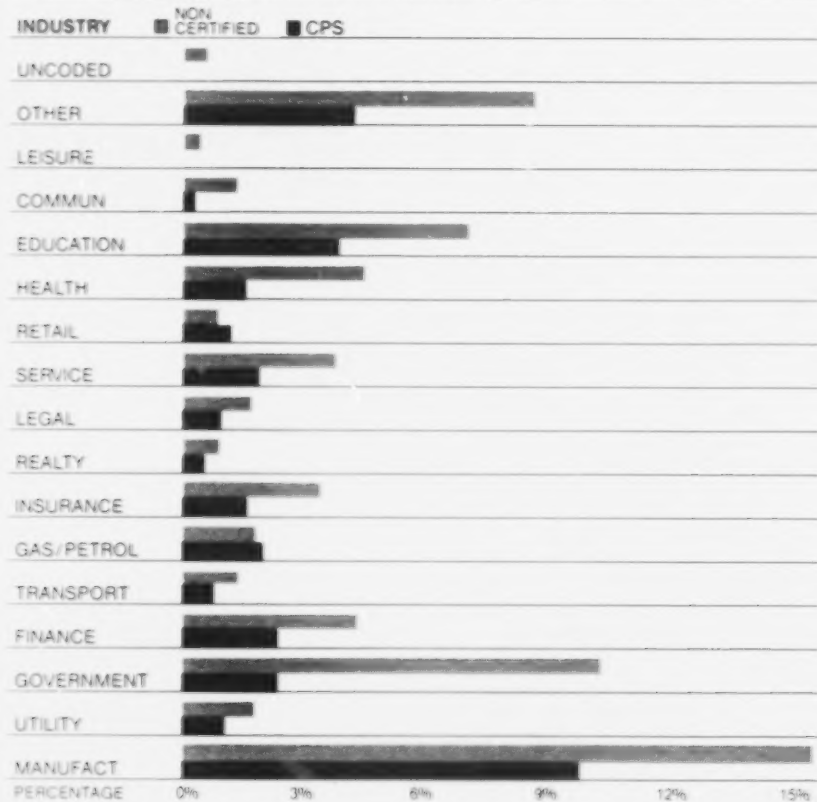
SURVEY DISTRIBUTION BY JOB TITLE

JOB TITLE	% OF SECRETARIES
OTHER	21%
STENO	1%
SEC	22%
SR SEC	8%
EXEC SEC	30%
EXEC ASST	18%

EMPLOYER PROFILE

Those participating in the survey worked in offices covering the spectrum from government to education. The largest industry represented was manufacturing. The next highest identifiable industry was government, followed by education.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION BY INDUSTRY



WHAT IS A CPS®?

A Certified Professional Secretary® is one who has achieved the rating that has become the recognized standard of measurement of secretarial proficiency.

Since the first Certified Professional Secretary examination in 1951, more than 17,000 have attained the CPS designation.

To acquire the CPS rating, a secretary must meet education and work experience requirements and pass the two-day examination. The six-part examination is administered annually in May by the Institute for Certifying Secretaries, a department of Professional Secretaries International.

The CPS examination covers six parts: behavioral science in business, business law, economics and management, accounting, office administration and communication, and office technology.

Although advantageous, membership in PSI is not required to become a CPS.

